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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7396
INFO ALNED/ALNED COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 000580

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DEPT FOR SCA (FRESE)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/31/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IR](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: ARMENIAN CONSUL CLAIMS "IRAN PREPARING FOR WAR"

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Jennifer L. Brush, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Ashgabat-based Armenian consular officer Artek Kalachayan somberly told Emboffs attending the May 26 Georgian national day celebration about his recent two-week trip to Iran, during which he traveled from the Iranian-Turkmenistani border (Ashgabat is 30km north of the border) to the Armenian border via Mashad and Teheran. Kalachayan described Iran as "preparing for war." Locals were stock-piling foodstuffs and home appliances (including, Kalachayan specified without explanation, light bulbs). Kalachayan reported that in at least one Iranian mosque the imam had led repeated chants of "Death to America." A new volunteer force of one million suicide bombers was standing at the ready and had joined highly armed police officers on their patrols. Kalachayan described pairs of suicide bombers in civilian clothes riding in the backs of regular patrol cars, and said the bombers were morally prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice. Kalachayan warned Emboffs that Iran, as a Persian and not Arab country with thousands of years of history, was not Iraq, and that the Iranians would fight a war in a qualitatively different manner from Iraqis, should the U.S. attack.

12. (C) In a separate conversation, Ukrainian diplomats told Charge on May 23 that their colleagues recently visiting Ashgabat from Tehran described the public mood as "dark," but they added the public supported President Ahmadinejad.

13. (C) COMMENT: Kalachayan is a well-known embassy contact who has previously traveled by car to Armenia via Iran and recalled his experiences with Conoff. Unlike his previous lighthearted recollections about his travels, Kalachayan on May 26 appeared very serious and morose. Post, obviously, cannot independently verify his claims of a million man suicide army, and does not know whether Kalachayan was passing along first- or second-hand observations; however his comments about Iranian society preparing for possible conflict, in particular in contrast to his previous visits to Iran, are significant. END COMMENT.
BRUSH